

## GM's Lifesteps: Good for Employees and Business

### Initiative in Brief

GM Vice President John Buttermore calls it an "overriding priority" while the UAW vice president Richard Shoemaker calls it a "number one joint priority". Whatever you call it, the GM LifeSteps employee wellness program is providing some pretty convincing data that prevention can make a difference to individual health and the bottom line. LifeSteps, the largest employee wellness initiative in the world with its some 1.1 million eligible participants, produced 18 peer reviewed journal articles to present that data to the scientific community and to those wishing to have more to justify their call for worksite health promotion programming.

The LifeSteps program is comprehensive and provides the following benefits to its members: 1) health risk appraisals, 2) disease management programs, 3) health fairs and screenings, 4) quarterly publications, 5) an extensive website, and 6) a host of wellness support classes and services.

For its investment in GM LifeSteps, the company gets 75% participation and a \$2.70 to \$1 return on investment (ROI). In addition to the financial returns, there have been positive health effects. The percentage of participants falling in the low risk category (0-2 risks) increased from 55% to 63.1% as participants lowered their health risks by modifying their lifestyles. Over 185,000 health risk factors have been reduced or eliminated. The program hails such accolades as the 2004 C. Everett Koop National Health Award from Stanford University and the 2004 Innovations in Prevention award from the US Department of Health and Human Services.



### Lessons Learned

- One size does not fit all, even within one company, especially one as large and diverse as GM with a huge working and retiree population.
- Obesity is not the problem, but rather an indication of more hidden health risks such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or high blood sugar.
- Adult targeted programs must be relevant, convenient, accessible, affordable, and interesting.
- Identify clear goals such as reducing sedentary behavior, and don't focus on weight loss.
- Keeping union and company management involved and informed is key to the success and sustainability of the program.

**Contact Info: Tim McDonald PA, MHSA**  
**Assistant Director, GMHS Operations/Programs**  
 General Motors  
 Phone: 248/753-5664  
 Email: timothy.mcdonald@gm.com

**Cost:** In the millions  
**Risk Factor:** Physical fitness/nutrition  
**Impact/Reach:** 1.1 million employees/retirees  
**Business/Sector:** Automotive/large business  
**ROI:** \$2.70: \$1.00 invested